



Post Office Box #277
Lake Oswego OR 97034

5 0 3 . 4 7 9 . 6 0 2 9

10/23/2009

Mr. Thomas Buckley
Sr. Deputy Chief, Telecommunications Access Policy Division
Wireline Competition Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. SW
Washington, DC 20054

RE: Request to extend RHCPP; WC Docket No. 02-60

Dear Mr. Buckley;

This letter is to request an extension of the June 30, 2010 deadline for funding commitments for the RHCPP in Oregon.

Given the unprecedented economic challenges that we face together as a nation, and with Oregon itself proven to have some of the highest unemployment rates and considered to be most stressed (see graph at conclusion), educating and earning the trust of rural communities to participate in the Rural Health Care Pilot Program (RHCPP) is fast becoming a major, if not daunting challenge. It is from a variety of issues and factors as stated below, that we request the FCC's consideration to extend the deadline by one year (June 30, 2011) to ensure the best possible outcome for the entire Rural Health Care Pilot Program, the providers, patients and communities we're all charged and committed to serve.

ISSUES FACED

- **Many Times, "Free" or Low-cost Doesn't Sell**

For successful broadband and health information technology adoption, it's about trust and getting our entire state (and nation) to pull together towards the same vision. Many times, we're working with individuals, organizations and agencies who have never worked with each other before. This innovation and collaboration, while challenging, in the end may well prove to be one of the most impactful and most rewarding outcomes of the RHCPP.

But understanding, trust and commitment are not built overnight; particularly, during times of great economic stress and budget uncertainty, like now. The needed relationships and trust take time to build through influence and demonstration (showing them how it works). We are only able to fully demonstrate the benefits of the RHCPP as each RFP roles out. Getting a site on the network, from LOA to FCL, is a process proving to take upwards of 3-6 months to complete. Due to the challenges of launching RHCPP and its processes and procedures, the Oregon Health Network's 1st FCL was not issued until May 2009.

- **Rural Outreach & Weather**

Add to the trust and proof factor is the Oregon issue of weather. Winter is fast approaching, and our ability to get out and reach the communities of greatest need, proves to be even more challenging for the very rural communities we're charged to serve. For RHCPP's in large rural states like Oregon, outreach (travel and relationship efforts) takes even more time. And it is becoming clear that with the June 30, 2010 deadline – time is what we do not have.

- **Pressure on Brand New Pilot Programs/Infrastructures**

Critical to the success of each RHCPP program is having an operational infrastructure capable to support and effectively service the RHCPP sites, sustainably. The RHCPP does not cover the costs required to do so. Therefore, in addition to raising the required matching funds, each RHCPP is required to also raise 100% of the operations costs not covered through the RHCPP. While many RHCPP projects have the advantage of being part of pre-existing structures (universities etc), many like OHN, have started from the ground up with a staff of 2-5 – and a herculean volunteer network. While RHCPP staff and volunteers are some of our nation's brightest and most committed, the effort to launch and sail a \$20.2 million dollar operation as a start-up organization is an undertaking of enormous magnitude, whoever you are.

Based upon the above issues, it's my sound belief that the current deadline imposes a major risk to our combined success. And while I'm hopeful that the FCC will quickly identify the need and value in extending the current deadline for all RHCPP's, please know that Oregon's RHCPP (Oregon Health Network) is not letting our foot off the gas pedal. We will continue to make great strides in our outreach, participation and state-wide collaboration efforts, and I invite you to see the caliber of our work and message at:

<http://www.oregonhealthnet.org>.

Our State remains vigilant and committed regardless of the challenges we face together. And OHN remains committed to the people of Oregon and our vision: *To ensure that all Oregonians have equal access to the best possible healthcare regardless of location.*

The FCC's Rural Health Care Pilot Program is an unprecedented opportunity for the entire country and for Oregon. And for that, we are sincerely grateful. Our intent in submitting this request is to make sure we all succeed in realizing the promise of this program.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,



Kim Lamb

Executive Director

cc. Ernesto Beckford, FCC; Dick Gibson, OHN Board Chair

AP ECONOMIC STRESS INDEX: Oregon & West Cost/Pacific NW

